

October 8, 2010

Aaron Todd
Rebuild Iowa Office
Wallace Building
502 E. Ninth St., 2nd Floor
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Mr. Todd:

I had the opportunity to attend the Iowa Smart Planning Public Input Session held in Boone yesterday afternoon. I sincerely appreciate the public out reach effort made by the task force.

I would like to make the following comments on the task force's recommendations. I have numbered my comments to correspond with the relevant recommendation.

- 1.1 The Office of Planning and Geographic Information Systems would have two "bosses", an 18 member GIS & Data Systems Council and a 19 member Planning Coordination Council. Both councils would be, "defining the mission and establish priorities and responsibilities for the OPGIS.

Both councils are quite large. It has been my experience that the larger the board the more cumbersome decision making becomes. Having two separate councils overseeing the same office or agency would not seem to be the most efficient way of providing the necessary oversight. Two councils with different priorities could wind up competing for scarce operational resources thus compromising the efficiency of the OPGIS.

Both councils would draw their membership from the same pool of agencies. There is no specific recommendation for seats reserved for private sector, business or industry representatives. I believe that this formulation does not address the need for diversity on such a potentially important board. Not everyone in Iowa works for a government.

I think one smaller and more diverse council would be more effective in setting consistent and complementary missions, priorities and responsibilities for the OPGIS.

1.4 I believe that the recommendations for determining if a plan is a "Smart Plan" or not should be revisited by the task force. I am in complete agreement with the idea that communities that have large rivers, lakes or other flood prone areas within their jurisdictions should address the prevention and mitigation, the response to and recovery from catastrophic flooding as an over riding priority.

There are no rivers that flow through Clarke County, Iowa or the City of Osceola, Iowa. Under a literal interpretation of the task forces recommendation the City of Osceola might not be able to receive a smart plan designation because it has not addressed a physical hazard (catastrophic flooding) that could not be realistically expected to ever happen.

This is an example of the dangers and inefficiencies that can attach to efforts to implement a one size fits all solution. I do not blame the task force for this. This very well intentioned mandate is the legislature's responsibility.

I take very strong objection to the recommendation for local plans to "consider and *meaningfully* address the 10 Smart Planning Principles" I believe that this is clearly beyond the language and intent of SF 2389. Meaningfully is, in my opinion, vague and entirely too subjective in this context. This recommendation should be stricken. The law already requires that cities consider these principles.

I also object to the recurring suggestion in this and other recommendations that access to state technical and financial assistance be tied to a voluntary, or optional local plan review process. Attaching these kinds of strings can quickly blur the difference between voluntary and mandatory.

3. Authorizing COGs to levy property taxes is just a very bad idea. I believe there is a zero per cent chance of the legislature approving such a measure. I think the task force's other recommendation would be strengthened by the removal of this suggestion. It is really immaterial if other states allow this practice or not.
- 3.3 Cities and counties already have the ability to levy for planning purposes within the general fund levy provided by law. I believe this recommendation means to create another optional levy for special or restricted use. The task force should probably clarify its position as to whether this levy would require voter approval or whether it could be approved by vote of a city council.
- 3.4 Once again I object to the idea of tying future grant or financial assistance decisions to a supposedly voluntary process of review and certification.
- 3.5 Remove the word "meaningful" from the justification for this recommendation for the same reasons as mentioned under recommendation 1.4 I think this recommendation blithely ignores the political realities of duly elected representative governments. I doubt the legislature or the governor would be

willing to voluntarily surrender so much discretion to even the smartest, best intentioned committees or administrators.

4. The DNR's role in this process should be purely advisory. The DNR already wields considerable influence in the planning of water, wastewater and solid waste disposal operations. Its authority and influence does not need to be further expanded.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



William A. Kelly
City Administrator
City of Osceola, Iowa